Council Highlights: December 2002

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COUNCIL HIGHLIGHTS is intended to provide quick updates on issues of interest to members and affiliates of the Council of Ontario Universities (COU). It is produced regularly throughout the academic year.

This issue covers the months of November and December 2002.

MPPs and researchers meet in first of a series of breakfast seminars

On October 31, 2002, the Ministry of Enterprise, Opportunity and Innovation and the Ontario Council on University Research (OCUR) hosted a breakfast seminar for MPPs. It is the first in a series of breakfast seminars designed to "bridge the gap" between policy makers and the research community by raising the awareness of science and innovation at Ontario universities, and how they both contribute to the prosperity of the province.

Minister Jim Flaherty and OCUR Chair Kerry Rowe, Vice-Principal (Research) of Queen's University, opened the seminar by welcoming members of the government caucus, university representatives, interested media and invited guests.

Dr. Deryn Fogg, Associate Professor, Department of Chemistry, University of Ottawa, was the featured guest speaker. Dr. Fogg gave a presentation on her work in the burgeoning field of catalytic chemistry, and the practical benefits that are becoming evident from basic research. She also drew upon personal experience as the recipient herself of numerous awards – including the Premier's Research Excellence Award, the John C. Polanyi Prize, and funding from both the Ontario Innovation Trust and the Canada Foundation for Innovation – to talk about the benefits of provincial research funding when conducting research at an Ontario university.

A series of questions followed Dr. Fogg's presentation, which led to further discussion about basic research and how it translates into applied industrial processes that provide both economic and social benefits.

Application Centre's 30 years of service commemorated

The year 2002 marks the 30th anniversary of service of the Ontario Universities' Application Centre (OUAC) to the Ontario university community. During the past three decades, OUAC has processed over 8.2 million applications for over 3.1 million applicants from around the world. To commemorate this achievement, COU President Ian Clark presented a framed poster highlighting the coat of arms of all universities served by the Centre to members of the OUAC Advisory Board at its November 28th meeting. In his remarks, Dr. Clark congratulated the Centre on its outstanding success in providing efficient, cost-effective, state-of-the-art centralized processing services. Following the presentation, OUAC Executive Director Greg Marcotte thanked Nipissing University President David Marshall for his contributions not only as the longest-standing Chair of the Advisory Board but also as Chair of the OUAC Budget Committee.

COU hosts reception for members of government caucus

On December 2, 2002, COU hosted its third annual reception for members of the government caucus. Council Chair Mordechai Rozanski and COU President Ian Clark welcomed the close to 70 government and university representatives, including Deputy Premier Elizabeth Witmer, Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities Dianne Cunningham; and Ministers John Baird, Tony Clement, Carl DeFaria, Brenda Elliott, Jim Flaherty, Doug Galt and Helen Johns.

This year's reception focused on basic research being undertaken at Ontario universities, and featured a display highlighting the breadth of university research projects across the province. Copies of the 2002 publication, *A Sampling of Success Stories of Provincial Investment in University Research* – a compilation of success stories illustrating the range and richness of university research supported by the Ontario government – were made available to guests. (The follow-up 2003 edition of *Success Stories* will be published by next summer. In addition, a publication highlighting federally supported research success stories is in the works and is due out early in the new year.)

COU also made available its latest progress report, *Access to Excellence: Countdown to the Double Cohort*. The 18-page brief not only evaluates advances made through joint government-university efforts over the past few years in preparation for the double cohort, but also notes what remains to be accomplished.

In addition, the Ontario Universities' Application Centre, which recently added an online university application process for Ontario secondary school students to its web application system, gave a presentation on how individuals can apply online – a time-saving option that will facilitate the processing of applications from the double cohort students that are expected to apply for fall 2003 admissions. To date, close to 80% of all Ontario secondary schools have registered with the Centre to enable their students to apply online. It is estimated that over 85% of the total applicant pool will apply via this user-friendly process.

Charles Baillie receives 2002 Visionary Award

On November 25, 2002, Charles Baillie, Chair and CEO of TD Bank Financial Group, was presented with the 2002 Visionary Award. The occasion was the sixth annual Visionary Seminar, presented by the Office of Partnerships for Advanced Skills (OPAS) and held this year at Queen's University. Mr. Baillie's address, *From Vision to Reality – Our Country, Your Future*, was broadcast via satellite and live webcast to 22 campuses across Ontario, B.C. and Alberta, and, all told, was heard by an audience of more than 3,000 participants. Bell Canada, an OPAS partner, sponsored this and last year's Visionary Seminar.

Ministers attend meeting of OPAS Board of Directors

Two Ontario ministers attended the December 5th meeting of the OPAS Board of Directors. Jim Flaherty, Minister of Enterprise, Opportunity and Innovation, discussed aspects of his new ministry's mandate and answered questions from the board. For Chris Hodgson, Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, this was his second attendance at an OPAS board meeting. Minister Hodgson spoke about his ministry's "Smart Growth" initiatives.

COU Working Group develops ODA guidelines for universities

The Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001 (ODA) is intended to improve opportunities for people with disabilities through identification, removal and prevention of barriers to participation in the life of the province. The ODA requires that provincial, municipal and key broader public sector organizations review their policies, programs and services through the development of annual accessibility plans.

The COU Working Group on the ODA has prepared *Guidelines for the University Sector*, a series of steps that a university may undertake in developing an accessibility plan. Universities will not have to identify or remove all barriers at the same time, and each institution will have the flexibility to identify its own priorities – both of which are important considering that government has provided no new funding to implement the act. Ontario universities, however, are already well advanced in ensuring that persons with disabilities have access to education and the

opportunities that education provides. The guidelines will enable universities to build on their demonstrated leadership and efforts to date in working with stakeholders through a range of activities. For a copy of the guidelines, visit COU's web site (www.cou.on.ca).

Second Annual Dialogue between COU health sciences affiliates and government

The second Annual Dialogue between COU's health sciences affiliates and the Ontario government was held on November 29, 2002. The forum provided an invaluable opportunity for health sciences programs and ministries to outline their top priorities for a provincial health human resources planning body. Representatives of the faculties of nursing, medicine, rehabilitation sciences and pharmacy met with senior officials from the ministries of Health and Long-Term Care; Finance; and Training, Colleges and Universities.

Stepped-up licensing/training process to aid international medical graduates

On November 21, 2002, the Government of Ontario announced a number of new initiatives for licensing and training international medical graduates (IMGs) in Ontario to help address the physician shortage in the province. The government's eight-point plan will significantly shorten the process that IMGs must go through to become licensed in Ontario and, as a result, more than 650 new physicians will be added to the health care system over the next five years.

Index on non-salary inflation in Ontario universities updated

COU revised the Ontario Universities Non-Salary Price Index (OUNSPI) for the first time since 1993. The index tracks the effect of non-salary related inflation in the Ontario university system. The results show that non-salary inflation for universities was 4.3% in 1999-2000 and 6.0% in 2000-2001. Much of these increases were due to the rise in the cost of utilities and library materials. The revised index will be posted on COU's web site (www.cou.on.ca) in the new year.

A fond farewell to a member of COU secretariat

After two and one-half years at COU, Paddy Buckley has wound down her responsibilities as a Research Associate in the Research, Analysis and Policy Division. Paddy was responsible for policy analysis on a wide range of issues including equity, student aid, athletics and relationships with other postsecondary institutions. In this capacity, she worked with a number of committees, task forces and working groups, and produced reports on equity issues, student assistance, the University Applicant Survey and the annual Ontario University Graduate Survey. She also co-ordinated the production of *Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001: Guidelines for the University Sector* and the yearly updating of the publication *COU Briefing Notes*.

In December 2002, Paddy assumed the role of Senior Policy Advisor at the Universities Branch of the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities.